

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
For the Montana National Register of Historic Places Program and State Antiquities Database

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Historical Society
PO Box 201202, 1410 8th Ave
Helena, MT 59620-1202

Property Address: **560 N. Park Avenue**

Historic Address (if applicable): **None**

City/Town: **Helena**

Site Number: **24 LC 2194**

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Lewis & Clark County**

Historic Name: **Western Life Insurance Building**

Original Owner(s): **Western Life Insurance Company**

Current Ownership ☒ Private ☐ Public

Current Property Name: **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana**

Owner(s): **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Montana, Inc.**

Owner Address: **PO Box 4309**
Helena, MT 5960-4309

Phone:

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **10N** Range: **3W**

NW ¼ **NW ¼** **SW ¼** of Section: **30**

Lot(s): **5, 9-10 prt of 11**

Block(s): **Unknown**

Addition: **Thompson Placer** Year of Addition: **1888**

USGS Quad Name: **Helena** Year: **1985**

Tax ID 05-1888-30-2-08-20-0000

Historic Use: **Office building**

Current Use: **Office building**

Construction Date: **1954** ☐ Estimated ☒ Actual

☒ Original Location ☐ Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference www.nris.mt.gov/topofinder2

☐ NAD 27 ☒ NAD 83 (preferred)

Zone: **12** Easting: **420285** Northing: **5160456**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date:

Historic District:

NRHP Eligible: ☐ Yes ☒ No Under C only

Date of this document: **November 13, 2009**

Form Prepared by: **Diana J. Painter, PhD**

Address: **3158 N. C Street, Spokane, WA 99205**

Daytime Phone: **(509) 290-5161**

MT SHPO USE ONLY

Eligible for NRHP: ☐ yes ☒ no not eligible under C

Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D not evaluated under A, B, or D

Date: 11/16/2010

Evaluator: Kate Hampton

Comments:

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Property Name: **560 N. Park Avenue**

Site Number: **24 LC 2194**

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

X See Additional Information Page

Architectural Style: **Modern** If Other, specify: **Curtain wall**

Property Type: **Commercial** Specific Property Type: **Office building**

Architect: **Berg & Jacobson Architects** Architectural Firm/City/State: **Helena, MT**

Builder/Contractor: Company/City/State: **Morrison & Maierle, Inc., (engineers) , Helena, MT**

Source of Information: **Helena building permit files**

The building at 560 N. Park Avenue is a four-story, largely rectangular building with a flat roof with a short parapet, and two penthouses. It is located along the east property line of its urban lot, about mid-way between the north and south property lines. The block on which it is located is bounded by N. Park Avenue/Gilbert Street on the north; N. Park Avenue on the east; W. Placer Avenue on the south; and W. Benton Avenue on the west. The building faces east onto N. Park Avenue and Hill Park beyond. To the north is the branch office of the Western Life Insurance Company (historic name) at 600 N. Park Avenue, and Yund Park and the Helena Civic Center building beyond. To the south are three structures; a small apartment building and two houses, one of which is used for a business.

The building is a steel frame and curtain wall construction with reinforced concrete end walls. Finishes include "Norman" brick cladding on the end walls, polished granite veneer on the entry bay, glass and synthetic stucco panels in an aluminum frame on the long sides of the rectangular building. It has a concrete foundation and built-up roof. The building is a Modern curtain wall building, constructed 1954-56 and designed by Helena architect Sigvald L. Berg of Helena, with Morrison & Maierle, Inc., consulting engineers.

Massing and design. The form of the 560 N. Park Avenue building represents a popular curtain wall type, which is characterized by a large, rectangular mass with curtain walls on the 'long' sides, anchored by the end walls, which in this case are reinforced concrete clad in colored face brick. The rectilinear form is broken by the presence of towers that project beyond the flat roof at the center of the south façade; near the center of the long west façade; and at the northwest corner of the building.

The building is enhanced by the presence of a small, glass penthouse structure centrally located above the entry. A larger, brick-clad penthouse is set back from the front façade, asymmetrically placed within the roof and aligning with the rear facade. A deep overhang with five downlights on the front of the glass penthouse projects beyond the plane of the front façade and visually terminates this feature. It also echoes the cantilevered roof that covers the front entry, at the base of the entry bay. The vertically-oriented entry bay is a counterpoint to the dominant horizontal lines of the front façade. At the same time, the horizontal lines of the cantilevered overhangs on the penthouse and at the entry appear to 'float' in front of the vertical, granite-clad entry bay, integrating the two major design features of the building.

The ribbon windows on the main, front façade carry the horizontal line of the building across its face, with the exception of the vertical entry. The rear of the building displays less glazing. The rear of the building does not have the classic curtain wall appearance of the front, although it may employ the same construction methods. (A newspaper article from the time stated that the rear of the building was finished in this way in order to allow for future expansion).

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Ribbon windows occur on the north half of the rear facade, but the windows on the south half are larger, paired and individually-placed, in a regular fenestration pattern. They do not have the same horizontal emphasis as the other windows on the building.

There is no glazing on the south or west building towers. Two large, two-part windows are located on each floor on the north facade of the main building. They are over-sized, consistent with the scale of this facade and the building as a whole. The sill of the first floor windows begins about 6'-0" off the ground, and they are about 9'-0" wide and 7'-0" tall. Smaller square, fixed lights are located on the brick-clad north tower, one on each floor. Large louvered ventilating grills are located near the top of the west towers on the building; small grills are located elsewhere on the building, including in a regular pattern on the front facade.

The main building entry is accessed via a broad stair made up of seven concrete steps with a vertical tubular metal rail. A handicap ramp of the same materials extends to the sidewalk in an L-shaped configuration to the left of the stair. The concrete 'landing' that fronts the entry is deep, echoing the flat-roof overhang. The overhang is cantilevered from the face of the building and finished with a tall, corrugated aluminum fascia.

The glazed entry projects about 2'-0" from the face of the main facade, forming a vestibule in front of the interior entry, which is set back slightly from the front plane of the building. The double entry doors of full-height glass are framed in dark, anodized aluminum. They are flanked by one-over-one-light windows of full-height glass surmounted by a four-light transom window. A portion of the entry vestibule that projects beyond the face of the building is framed in brass-colored aluminum.

The major secondary entry to the building is located adjacent to and south of the tower on the rear of the building, facing the parking area. This entry occurs within the brick-clad wall that extends to the rear penthouse. It consists of a double door of full-height glass, topped by a transom. This entry door is also of dark, anodized aluminum. Stairs and detailing are the same as the front entry, with concrete steps and a concrete ramp for handicap access. The entry is covered with a flat roof, supported by one 4"x4" metal post set on a 4'-0" high concrete pier. The roof is finished in a tall aluminum fascia of the same design as the main entry roof.

One flush metal service door is located on the east facade of the northerly tower. It has a small light with wire glass. Another service entry is located on the south facade, within the tower. This also has a flush metal door of a similar design.

An additional feature of the building is the service area on the northeast corner. This consists of an irregularly shaped concrete loading and utility platform that encloses a trash pick-up area. Stairs to the platform are located to the east and west. The tubular metal balustrades in this location are the same design as elsewhere on the building. The area adjacent to the building is covered with a flat metal roof supported by three 4"x4" metal posts. This roof is about 12' high, placed to avoid the window in this location. It has a temporary appearance.

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Materials and finishes. The most prominent aspect of this building is the curtain wall on the front façade. This is made up of ribbon windows alternating with three-dimensional spandrel panels of synthetic stucco. The nearly flush horizontal rails of the aluminum frame are 5" wide. The projecting vertical ribs (mullions) are tapered (trapezoidal in section). They are 5"± at their base, 3" at the narrowest point, and 5-3/4" deep. The design of the front façade is symmetrical, with the entry being placed in the center. On each side of the entry are three major bays, with full-height vertical mullions separating the windows. There are six windows in each bay, which are separated by a full-height 'pilaster' of dark-colored synthetic stucco. The width and color of this element is repeated in the return on the brick-clad endwall that finishes the building.

The base of the building is continuous, in contrast to the bays of the front façade. It consists of a row of nearly square (3'-4" high x 3'-21/2" wide) windows set deep (10-1/2") within their openings. The surface of the 6'-0"± tall base as well as the windows sills and all other surfaces, is clad in polished granite veneer. Shadows on and within the base, as well as the dark color of the granite veneer, anchor the building and cause the curtain wall to appear lighter.

The "Norman" brick on the building is in a running bond pattern. The brick itself has a textured finish and the multiple colors of yellow, orange and terra cotta are randomly placed. The synthetic stucco panels are dull gold and deep terra cotta. The glazing has a blue tint, and appears to be slightly reflective. The polished granite panels are mainly shades of pale brown and beige in warm tones. The concrete is natural color and rails and balustrades are painted a pale pinkish-brown. The aluminum framing is a natural color, as are the aluminum fascias where the historic fascias remain.

Changes over time. The materials of the building were historically warmly tinted glass (according to a period photograph) and enamel-coated steel spandrel panels in a turquoise color. Historically the warm tones of the brick contrasted with the cool tones of the aluminum curtain wall with its turquoise panels. The windows and spandrel panels were (and are) framed by an aluminum frame whose horizontal rails are nearly flush and whose vertical mullions project 5-3/4" from the face of the building. As a result, the vertical line dominates, as it does today, and historically provided a contrast to the strong horizontal of the ribbon windows and bands of spandrel panels. The dark polished granite emphasized the building entry and signage, as well as the building base, and contrasted with the lighter colors of the curtain wall. The building was given additional solidity by the brick-clad end walls and small towers located at either end and at the rear penthouse.

Today the spandrel panels have been replaced by three-dimensional synthetic stucco panels in a dull gold color. They are set within the original aluminum framework, and provide a contrast to the smooth, machined finish that was the original intent of the building. The full-height pilasters separating the bays of the curtain wall appear to have historically been aluminum, and in the same plane as the other cladding materials.

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Today they are three-dimensional synthetic stucco panels that repeat the color of the brick, although they still extend the full height of the building. The south tower has been enlarged and clad in synthetic stucco. It appears that the rear tower has also been enlarged and clad in the synthetic stucco (the original appearance of the rear tower is unknown). Large-scale horizontal reveals carry the horizontal lines of the curtain wall through the vertical towers, which historically had a smooth brick finish.

The 'floating' appearance of the canopy over the front entry was historically emphasized by the use of minimal materials for the front entry stairs, balustrades and design of the vestibule. This has been respected in the design and color of the entry features today, although the minimal nature of the entry has been undermined by addition of a second stair and handicap ramp to the south of the entry stair.

The signage on the building today consists of freestanding letters spelling "Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana" on a small blue panel, along with their logo, placed close to the center of the granite panel. Historically the signage on this panel consisted of large, free-standing letters placed on the upper portion of the granite bay. The scale of the building, and the expectation that it would continue to overlook the park to the city beyond, no doubt influenced the size, design and location of the historic signage. It was in scale with the building and the central panel, designed to emphasize the entry, the business and building name, and the penthouse feature. A second sign on the building consisted of freestanding letters on the north side of the roof, likely illuminated at night. The signage today appears underscaled in contrast to the original. The granite cladding on the entry has been damaged over time with the installation and removal of various signs.

The overhangs on the entries and penthouses retain what appear to be their original, corrugated aluminum fascias. The metal fascia and gutters on the main building appear to be replacements and do not match the corrugated aluminum trim seen elsewhere on the building.

Landscaping and site features. The building at 560 N. Park Avenue is largely surrounded on the north, west and south sides by parking. The building lot naturally slopes down toward the east. The main front entry sits above the grade, accessed via seven steps and a handicap ramp. The main rear entry is below grade, in order to access the first floor, via concrete steps, a concrete handicap ramp, and a small asphalt walkway from the northwest parking area. A concrete wall retains the west parking area, creating a small patio area at this entry. There is a small lawn on the east side of the building, behind the front sidewalk, and a small lawn on the south side. There is no other landscaping.

Accessory structure. A two-vehicle garage is located on the east property line, in alignment with the south edge of the building. This building has a rectangular footprint, a flat roof with metal coping at the parapet, and an open covered area on the east side. Construction materials for the structure are unknown.

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

It is clad in brick veneer and has a slab concrete foundation. There are two wood, roll-up, overhead doors with three lights each on the west side of the original building. The east façade of the original garage displays two, two-over-two-light, awning-style windows with steel frames.

The open part of the building is wood-frame construction with a post and pier foundation, finished in the same synthetic stucco panels as the main building. The north and south facades of this addition are clad in the material, but are open at the bottom and have three openings in the upper portion on each side. The east façade is partially enclosed with stucco panels. The side facades have a high parapet, to visually align the 1972 addition with the roofline of the garage.

BUILDING DESIGNERS

The architect for the building at 560 N. Park Avenue was Sigvald L. Berg of Helena, with Morrison & Maierle, Inc., consulting engineers. Sigvald L. Berg (1895-1985), who was of Norwegian heritage, spent most of his career in Helena, although he also gained architectural experience in Berkeley, California. Berg graduated from Montana State University in Bozeman and worked throughout Montana on a wide range of industrial, commercial and institutional building types in his career. One of his most well-known residential commissions was for the home of Barclay Craighead in 1936, who was the secretary to Senator Burton K. Wheeler and director of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in Helena. Another well-known commission was a renovation of Cass Gilbert's Montana Club.

During the Depression Berg was the supervising architect for the FHA for the state of Montana and the local liaison for the Depression-era "Better Homes" program in Montana. His California experience stood him in good stead after the 1935 Helena earthquake, when he worked on inspecting damaged buildings and re-writing the local building code for seismic safety. His interest in modern architecture is evidenced by his attendance at a three-day symposium in 1948 offered by Los Angeles architect Richard Neutra (*The Independent Review*, July 25, 1948). He joined with Lorren O. Bradford, another graduate from Montana State University, in 1950.

Morrison & Maierle, Inc. was an engineering and architectural firm (it was known as "Morrison Engineering Co., consulting engineers and architects," in 1947). Architectural members of the firm later opened their own office, under the name Crossman & Whitney. Today the firm is known as Crossman, Whitney, Griffin (CWG) and is still located in Helena. Morrison & Maierle, Inc. are also still located in Helena, although they have broad-based engineering practice and ten offices throughout the west. CWG has undertaken most of the renovations on the 560 N. Park Avenue building.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

Curtain wall construction was combined with masonry and with steel frame construction at mid-century to create what has been called the "quintessential symbol of post-World War II modern architecture" (*Prudon, 2008:107*). Curtain wall construction is easily recognizable and readily associated with commercial and institutional building types at mid-century.

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ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

In addition to being identified with its typical stylistic treatment, curtain wall construction refers to the material itself, its manufacture, installation, and the construction methods with which it is associated (*Prudon, 2008:107*).

Separating the structural system of a building from its window wall was attractive to building designers and owners because it created more light on building interiors and allowed for more flexibility in the use of interior spaces. The larger glazed areas in curtain wall construction, which allowed for natural light in interior work spaces, was made possible by new methods of manufacturing glass and made practical by widespread use of air conditioning after the World War II. Improvements in sealants and insulation materials also made this form of design and construction practical.

The metal most commonly associated with mid-century curtain wall construction is aluminum, which replaced steel in the post-war era as the material of choice for this application. Aluminum framing for curtain wall construction was extruded and could, as a result, take on any cross sectional shape (*Kaskel, 1995:24*). Aluminum was readily available and inexpensive after World War II, as the output of the nation's aluminum plants was adapted to civilian purposes.

The use of exterior curtain walls also rationalized the construction process, leading to great efficiencies in building production. Whether the curtain wall was fabricated primarily on site or prefabricated in large panels, the metal components were produced at the factory, leading to labor savings on site. The material was also lighter than traditional masonry, allowing for easier handling and reduced shipping costs.

A number of materials were used for the spandrel panels under the windows, but the most popular were metal or glass. Glass panels were manufactured under the names Spandrelite and Vitrolux, and came in eight and sixteen colors respectively. Porcelain enamel on steel, which could also be manufactured in a numerous colors, was a popular material and finish for spandrel panels. Aluminum and stainless steel were also used. So although there were numerous possibilities in the use of color and materials for the curtain wall building, the blues and greens of the 1950s-era curtain wall buildings are closely associated with post-war institutions, from government buildings to businesses such as the Western Life Insurance Company.

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HISTORY OF PROPERTY

X See Additional Information Page

The Western Life Insurance Company. The Western Life Insurance Company was founded in Helena on June 20, 1910 under the name "Montana Life Insurance Company." At that time it had two employees and operated out of two rented rooms. In 1928 the company moved to its third home, at Fuller Avenue and W. Lawrence, considered "one of the most imposing [buildings] in the Capital city" (*Bartech, 1950:1:1*). The company changed its name to Western Life Insurance Company on February 7, 1938. In 1950, noted on the occasion of its 40th anniversary, the company operated in Montana, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Washington, Oregon, California and North Dakota and employed 300 men (no mention was made of the number of women it employed).

Development of 560 N. Park. The architect for the building at 560 N. Park Avenue was Sigvald L. Berg of Helena, with Morrison & Maierle, Inc., consulting engineers. A conditional use permit was issued April 1955; the subsequent building permit valued the cost of construction at \$1,350,000

Groundbreaking for the new building occurred on December 21, 1954. The opening of the new building occasioned a full page of the newspaper. The front page of Section Two of *The Independent Record*, was dedicated to the new building and offices. The newspaper article introduced the piece with the following praise: "The functional beauty of the modern office building with its simplicity of line and impressive site makes as splendid contribution to the stature of the city and lends a note of distinction to the community" (*"Functional Beauty of Modern Office is Distinct Contribution to Community," The Independent Record, July 8, 1956*).

INFORMATION SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

X See Additional Information Page

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- "Western Life Building Purchased," *The Independent Record*, May 3, 1961:1.
- "Western Life Opens New Home Office Building," *The Independent Record*, July 8, 1958:1.
- "Western Life Will Move Offices in '61," *The Independent Record*, April 9, 1959:1.
- "Western Life Will Not Disappear from Helena," *The Independent Record*, August 13, 1961:17.

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The estimated construction cost of the structure when the building permit was issued was \$1,350,000.

The following articles described the new structure in great detail, including the type of music played over the speaker system, the design of the sidewalks, the materials of the acoustical ceilings, the service elevator, and the type of phone system. Four half columns were devoted to the design of the executive suites. A banquet room on the first floor of the north wing accommodated a commercial kitchen and seating for an impressive 500 people. The specifications for the building were described as follows:

The building has four floors; inside measurement is 200 feet long by 72 feet in width, containing 57,600 square feet of floor area. In a subbasement 30 feet by 72 feet is located the boiler and equipment room. On the roof is a penthouse 40 by 60 feet in which is installed the elevator machinery and cooling towers for the air conditioning equipment. In the first portion of the penthouse is a room with glass on three sides which may be used as a observation or sight-seeing room.

The building is fire proof throughout, also earthquake resistant. The foundations and walls are reinforced concrete. The columns and girders are heavy structural steel. The exterior front is baked enamel steel panels. Over the front entrance is a 20 foot wide panel of matched polished granite. The rear wall is light-weight cement panels which gives a similar appearance to the front wall. The ends and a portion of the rear wall is constructed of Norman brick. The windows are glazed with heat absorbing thermopane plate glass (Functional Beauty of Modern Office Is Distinct Contribution to Community," July 8, 1956:1).

At the dedication ceremony on July 14, 1956, company president R. B. Richardson announced, "We at Western Life, by the erection of what we believe to be one of the most modern office buildings in the country, are further exemplifying our faith in the future of our great state and of the west in general." He expressed the company's philosophy in building the new, up-to-date structure as follows: "[The building's] employment of the most modern devices in construction and operation was a matter of careful planning and design – which we are sure will more than pay for the initial cost through increased efficiency and ease of operation." (*"Invite public To Open House July 14," The Independent Record, July 8, 1956*).

Nonetheless, the company announced in 1959 that it would be moving its headquarters to St. Paul and constructing a new head office with St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company, an affiliate since 1957. After joining with the St. Paul Company, Western Life offered a broader array of services in 40 states. Richardson justified his decision in a five-point statement published in *The Independent Record* on April 9, 1959. The accompanying article stated that, "No decision has been reached on the disposition of the company's beautiful home office building here which has been a matter of civic pride and has served the community in many valuable ways" (*"Western Life Will Move Offices in '61," The Independent Record, April, 9, 1959*).

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The company was expanding both its products and geographic scope, and felt that they were better able to do that from St. Paul. More than half of the company's employees at the time re-located with the firm. The company sold the building to the Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph Company for their use as a headquarters building, and built the smaller office building at 600 N. Park Avenue in 1961 to use as a branch office and house their remaining employees in Helena.

Subsequent owners and renovations. Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph Company occupied the building at 560 N. Park Avenue beginning in 1961. About 1969 the company became known as Mountain Bell. Beginning in the late 1980s it was owned by US West. These apparent changes in building ownership actually reflect changes in the company. The telephone company continued to occupy the building until about 1996, when Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana bought the structure.

When Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph took over the building in 1961 they expanded the parking lot and undertook an interior remodel. The building was remodeled and some siding replaced in 1966 by contractor Johnston & Sharbono. Over the years many interior renovations took place. The addition to the garage, which is a covered outdoor eating area for employees today, occurred in 1971. A remodel in 1972 was undertaken by the firm of Crossman & Whitney, an architecture firm that 'spun off from' the primarily engineering firm of Morrison & Maierle. In 1979-80 a structural retrofit of the building took place and exterior sheathing was replaced. Crossman & Whitney remodeled the building again in 1981 for the owner. In 1982 the building was re-roofed.

In 1990 a remodel was undertaken by the new version of the architectural firm Crossman, Whitney, Griffin (known as CWG today). They were also employed to renovate the building when Blue Cross Blue Shield took it over about 1996. Blue Cross Blue Shield retrofitted the building to conform with the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, including alterations to the building entry (the stairs had been rebuilt in 1992). They also undertook an extensive interior remodel, including remodeling the lobby; changes to the building exterior (exact changes unknown); and upgrades the mechanical and electrical system for the building. They continue to occupy the building today.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

NRHP Listing Date:

Evaluated Under Criterion C only – more research required for A, B, of D eligibility

NRHP Eligibility: ☐ Yes ☒ No ☒ Individually ☐ Contributing to Historic District ☐ Noncontributing to Historic District

NRHP Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Area of Significance: **Architecture** Period of Significance: **1956**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

☐ See Additional Information Page

The Western Life Insurance Company at 560 N. Park Avenue was a good example of a post-war curtain wall building (Criterion C). As originally constructed, it displayed the characteristic building form, materials, colors, and construction techniques of the classic post-war curtain wall structure, and was likely the largest and most prominent of such structures with a commercial use in Helena when built. In addition to the more typical characteristics of the style, the Western Life Insurance Building displayed an unusual transparent observation penthouse (still extant) that embellished the building's profile and entry bay. However, the integrity of the building has been undermined by subsequent renovations. The most significant of these renovations, although skillfully done, removed the exterior sheathing of the building and replaced it with materials that do not have the same color, texture, reflectivity, or surface dimension as the original building cladding.

It was common in the post-war era for a building of this stature to be associated with a business institution, in this case the Western Life Insurance Company, which was founded in Helena in 1910 (Criterion A). Like many businesses, it sought a modern and up-to-date style in the post-war years to bear its 'brand.' The company only occupied the building for five years however, before moving its headquarters to St. Paul and selling the building to another business institution, the Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph Company, who eventually sold it to Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana.

INTEGRITY

☒ See Additional Information Page

The following is an analysis of the building's integrity with respect to the seven aspects of integrity.

- Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.

The building is located in its historic location.

- Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.

The design of the building has been altered by the replacement of the original metal panels that were flush with the flush rails of the aluminum framing with three-dimensional synthetic stucco panels that project about 6" from the face of the building. The aluminum 'pilasters' that separated the major bays on the front façade have also been replaced with synthetic stucco

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INTEGRITY

Panels whose shape creates another design feature on the building. Additionally, the towers on the south and west sides of the building have been enlarged, finished in synthetic stucco, and horizontal reveals added to coincide with the horizontal divisions of the curtain wall. Additional design changes to the structure include the addition of a handicap ramp and ADA-compliant railings on the front stairs and entry, which changes the appearance of what, was a very minimalistic feature. The scale and design of the signage, which was originally an integral part of the building, has also been altered in size, configuration, and placement. Finally, the proportions of the windows and their relationship to the spandrel panels have been changed.

The lobby or a significant public space of a structure can, at times, be considered part of its historic significance with respect to the National Register of Historic Places. With commercial buildings, this consideration is typically applied to lobby spaces which, particularly for modern buildings, are often visible from the street and part of the building's overall design features. The lobby and entrance for this building has been significantly altered, particularly with the addition of an interior open elevator that alters the progression from the street to the lobby. The interior vestibule has also been altered for ADA compliance, and the original doors and windows removed. Lastly, the murals of Montana artist Irvin Shone that once embellished the lobby are no longer present.

- Setting is the physical environment of a historic property.

The setting of the building is largely intact. About the time the building was constructed, neighboring parcels were occupied by residences and residential development. Over time the houses have been removed for parking lots and today the site is surrounded by parking on the north, south and west sides. At some point a garage was constructed on the west side, and this was later expanded for a covered employee outdoor space. The neighborhood surrounding the building is intact, and the building retains its historic relationship to Hill Park across the street.

- Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.

The materials of the building have been altered. The east curtain wall of the building was once clad in steel panels with a baked enamel finish and tempered glass with a warm tint. The curtain wall on the back (west) of the building was cemesto panels and glass. Today the steel and cemesto panels have been replaced with synthetic stucco panels with a three-dimensional rather than flat surface. The south and west towers of the building are also clad in this material.

- Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.

The workmanship of the building has been altered by the addition of the synthetic stucco cladding discussed above. It is not known whether the curtain wall components of the historic building were assembled in the field or pre-fabricated. Retrofitting the aluminum framing of the curtain wall with the synthetic stucco panels would likely have required workmanship that differed slightly from the original construction methods. Both panel types however were machine-made and fitted to the aluminum frame, and in this sense the workmanship was similar.

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 13

Property Name: **560 N. Park Avenue**

Site Number: **24 LC 2194**

INTEGRITY

- Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.

The feeling of the building at 560 N. Park Avenue has been undermined by the removal of the original metal paneling on the curtain wall and its replacement by synthetic stucco. Although the major character-defining features of the building are intact or largely intact, including the entry features, penthouse, brick endwalls and aluminum framing of the curtain wall, the aesthetic quality conveyed by the color, texture, and flat surface of mid-century curtain wall structures is so strong and so closely associated with the period and its building stock, that removal of those materials results in a loss of the aspect of feeling.

- Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

The building continues in many ways to convey the reasons for its significance. The main reason for the building's significance, however, is as a good example of a post-war curtain wall building, which by definition incorporated certain materials, construction methods, and building forms. While some materials have been altered, the building retains sufficient integrity to retain its association with its era and method of construction.

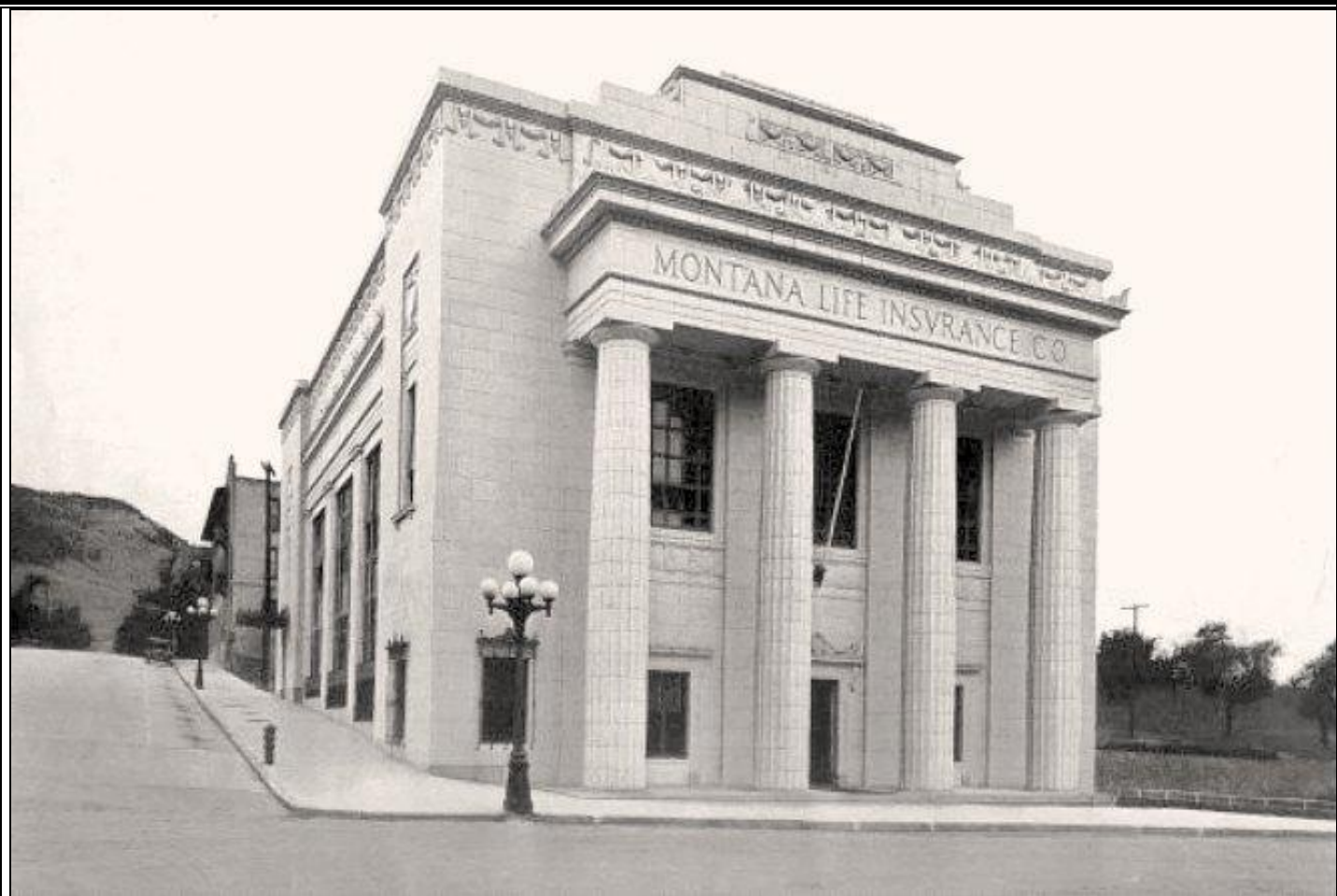
Summary. The building retains integrity of location, setting, workmanship and association. It does not retain integrity of design, materials or feeling. While the building retains most of the aspects of integrity, its design and material integrity is, in this case, particularly critical to the building. Additionally, the building's feeling, or aesthetic expression of the time, has been lost. This is the main reason for its significance. The building therefore does not retain sufficient integrity to be listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. With further research and evaluation, the building may be eligible under Criteria A, B, or D. In addition, the building may be of interest for a local register or for local planning purposes, and may contribute to a potential historic district.

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 14

Property Name: **560 N. Park Avenue**

Site Number: **24 LC 2194**



Former Montana Life Insurance Company at W. Fuller and Lawrence
Courtesy "Helena as She Was, Images of Montana's Capital City"

Section Two

The Independent Record

Section Two

Vol. XIII—No. 530

Helena, Montana, Sunday, July 8, 1934

Price Ten Cents

Western Life Opens New Home Office Building

Functional Beauty of Modern Office Is Distinct Contribution to Community

Helena as a city and as a town, the building, also the fine end on new center was given a historical touch when the splendid new home office building of the Western Life Insurance company was opened in use.

The functional beauty of the modern office building with its lightness of line and suggestive of the old and suggestive of the new, was a splendid contribution to the city and to the community.

That much work and planning went into the endeavor is highly apparent in the building and its contribution to the community. The building is a most efficient thing in its design. A most beautiful thing in its design is the building and its contribution to the community.

The grand opening ceremony took place on the 21. The building is a most efficient thing in its design. A most beautiful thing in its design is the building and its contribution to the community.

The building has four floors, the first floor is the main floor, the second floor is the executive floor, the third floor is the executive floor, and the fourth floor is the executive floor. The building is a most efficient thing in its design. A most beautiful thing in its design is the building and its contribution to the community.

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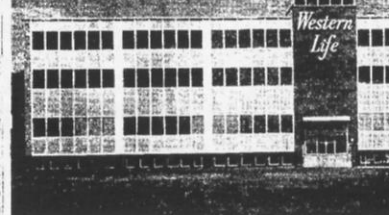
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EXECUTIVE OFFICES ON THIRD FLOOR—Persons visiting the executive floor of the new office building of the Western Life Insurance company are greeted by a pleasant receptionist who makes contact with the executives. The executive offices are located on the third floor of the spacious new building. The receptionist and the executive offices are located on the third floor of the spacious new building. The receptionist and the executive offices are located on the third floor of the spacious new building.

South wing of executive floor—The executive offices, claims, policy loans, underwriting, policy and superior line officers' quarters are in the south wing of the new home office building. The executive offices are located on the third floor of the spacious new building. The receptionist and the executive offices are located on the third floor of the spacious new building.



GRACE HELENA SKYLINE—The functionally beautiful and dignified new home office building of the Western Life Insurance company is the new and modern building of the Western Life Insurance company. The building is a most efficient thing in its design. A most beautiful thing in its design is the building and its contribution to the community.

Executive Offices Located on Third Floor of New Building; Many New Features Speed Up Operation

In the extreme north section of the office of Dr. E. H. Lind, this architect and then the building was designed. The building is a most efficient thing in its design. A most beautiful thing in its design is the building and its contribution to the community.

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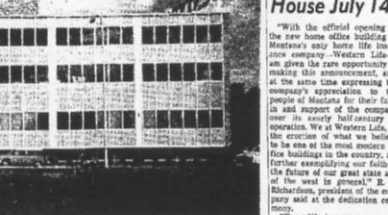
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Invite Public To Open House July 14

With the official opening of the new home office building of Montana's only home life insurance company, Western Life, we give the rare opportunity of making this announcement, and at the same time expressing the company's appreciation to the people of Montana for their faith in and support of the company over its twenty-half century of operation. We at Western Life, to the extent of what we believe, are further emphasizing our faith in the future of our great state and of the west in general, and in B. Richardson, president of the company and at the dedication ceremony.

For a life insurance company, certain disadvantages exist from being domiciled in Montana. Not only are there certain tax disadvantages, but also the relative sparsity of population makes the reaching of the public with our product more difficult and expensive. These advantages, however, have been outweighed by the inherent love of Montana and its people and by our complete faith in the state's future, which we are participating in financial investment and activity in state and state affairs. The faith has been, and we feel, will continue to be, fully justified by your loyal support and patronage.

The building of Western Life's new home office, which was made necessary by the company's growth to a point of having over \$500 million of life insurance in force, is a building which is the most modern device in construction and operation was a matter of capital planning and design, which we are sure will more than pay for the initial cost through increased efficiency and ease of operation. The building is a most efficient thing in its design. A most beautiful thing in its design is the building and its contribution to the community.

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WESTERN LIFE PRESIDENT, B. R. Richardson, discussing the new home with Judge Carl Beach, General Counsel. Judge Beach is the only living past president of the Montana Company. In the background is one of the original oil paintings depicting important events in Montana history executed by Irvin Shapero.

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Shope Paintings Grace Walls Of Home Office

In an effort to preserve in the new home of the historic company, the economic development of Montana and at the same time to furnish color and interest in its new home building, Western Life Insurance company commissioned from Irvin Shapero, Montana's most successful artist, the painting of the new home office building. The building is a most efficient thing in its design. A most beautiful thing in its design is the building and its contribution to the community.

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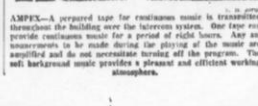
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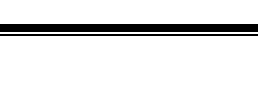
EMPLOYEES—This pleasant room is artistically furnished to furnish rest and refreshment for employees in the new home office building. The building is a most efficient thing in its design. A most beautiful thing in its design is the building and its contribution to the community.



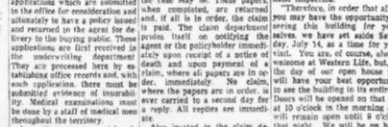
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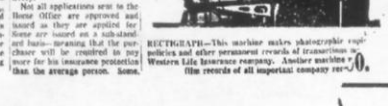
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OPEN-HOUSE

Northwest's Most Modern Office Building — 600 Park Avenue, Helena

YOU ARE INVITED

by



your Western Life general agent

A. T. Schultz

H. L. Paulsen

and associates

H. C. Langenbach — G. M. McCarthy

to come to Helena

SATURDAY, JULY 14th

All Will Be Welcome Between 10 a. m. and 9 p. m.

AND VISIT THE NEW HOME OF

WESTERN LIFE

INSURANCE COMPANY

4th largest legal reserve stock company selling individual
Life Insurance and Annuity contracts exclusively, of more
than 1,300 American Life Insurance companies.

Montana's only home life insurance company preparing for its
second half-century of service to Montanans and residents
of 10 other Western states and Alaska.

Courtesy "Helena as She Was, Images of Montana's Capital City"

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 17

Property Name: **560 N. Park Avenue**

Site Number: **24 LC 2194**



"Western Life" in the mid-1950s

Courtesy "Helena as She Was, Images of Montana's Capital City"



Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana in 2009

Photograph by Diana Painter

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **560 N. Park Avenue**

Site Number: **24 LC 2194**



Description: **Front (east) and side (south) facades, November 6, 2009; viewed from southeast**



Description: **Rear (west) and south facades, November 6, 2009; viewed from southwest**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **560 N. Park Avenue**

Site Number: **24 LC 2194**



Description: **North side façade, November 6, 2009; viewed from north**



Description: **Rear (west) façade, November 6, 2009; viewed from west**

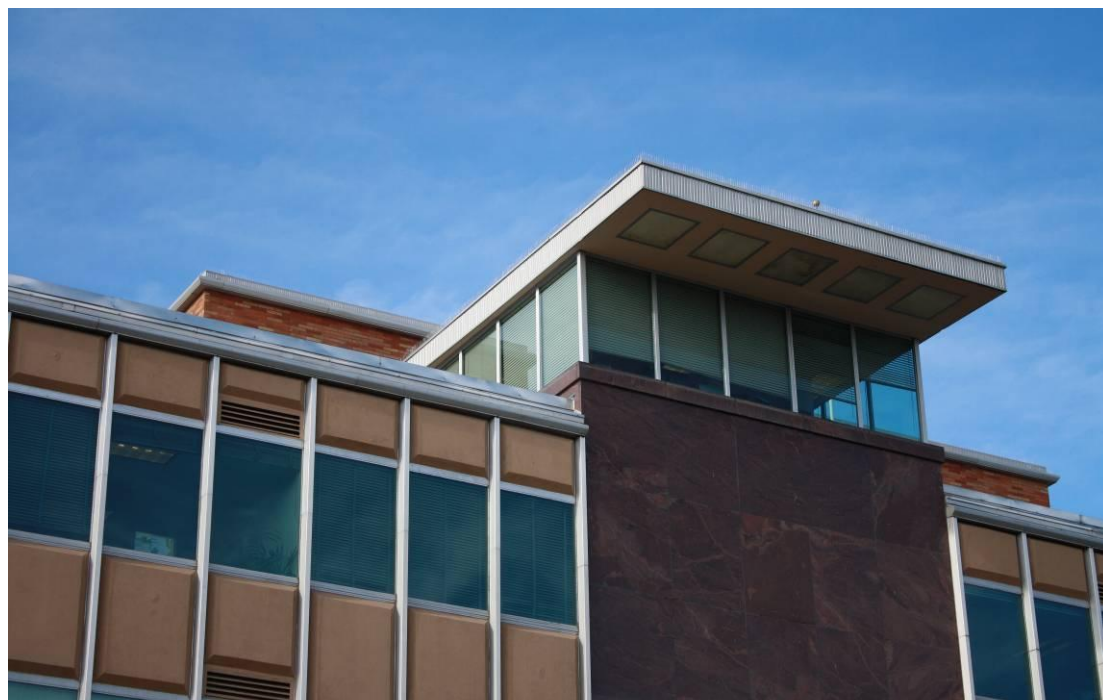
MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **560 N. Park Avenue**

Site Number: **24 LC 2194**



Description: **Front entry with penthouse above, November 6, 2009; viewed from east**



Description: **Detail of penthouse above entry, November 6, 2009; viewed from east**

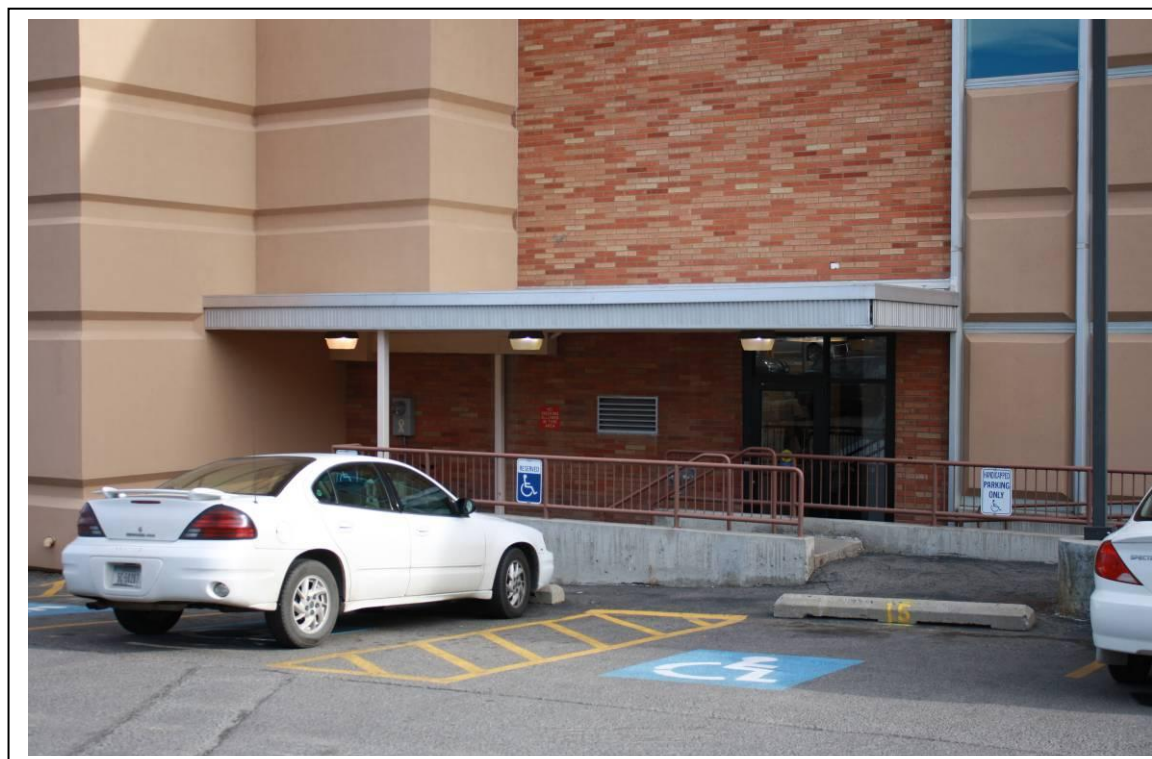
MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **560 N. Park Avenue**

Site Number: **24 LC 2194**



Description: **Front entry, November 6, 2009; viewed from east**



Description: **Rear entry, November 6, 2009; viewed from west**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **560 N. Park Avenue**

Site Number: **24 LC 2194**



Description: **Details: synthetic stucco, aluminum frame, brick veneer (above); synthetic stucco on tower (below)**



Description: **Detail: synthetic stucco, granite veneer, tinted windows on front (east) façade**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **560 N. Park Avenue**

Site Number: **24 LC 2194**



Description: **Garage, November 6, 2009; view from west**

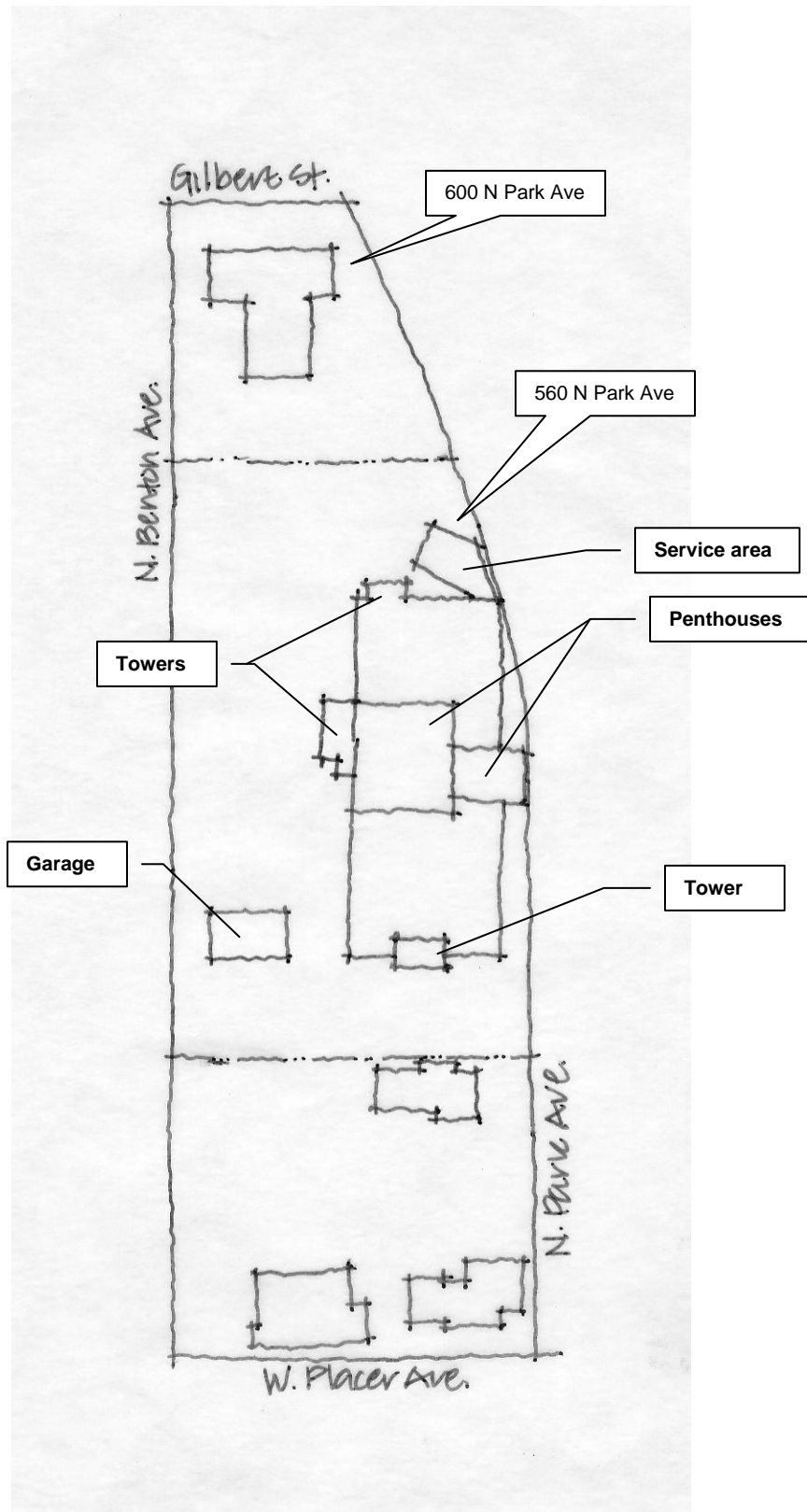


Description: **Garage, November 6, 2009; view from east**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
SITE MAP

Property Name: 560 N. Park Avenue

Site Number: 24 LC 2194



MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

Property Name: 560 N. Park Avenue

Site Number: 24 LC 2194

